

CONGRESS SHOULD PASS SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION

(Mr. ETHERIDGE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call on this House to pass school construction legislation before we adjourn for the year. We should not even consider ending this session until we tend to the needs of our children for new school construction.

Across the country at this very moment more than 53 million children are attending classes in our Nation's schools. We now have more children in our schools than we have had at any time in our history even at the height of the baby boom.

Our schools are bursting at the seams and we know that the explosion in enrollment growth we are experiencing and will experience over the next 10 years is going to stretch local communities even farther.

Today many of our children are in overstuffed classrooms. Too many of our teachers are forced to struggle in cramped trailers instead of a quality facility, and too many parents must watch helplessly as their children are condemned to attend a run-down school because Congress refuses to act.

Mr. Speaker, this Congress must not leave town without addressing this crisis. We must not sneak out the back-door without passing commonsense school construction assistance.

A SUCCESSFUL AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM

(Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, after-school hours are the most vulnerable for school children to become involved with gangs, with drug abuse, with violence and with vandalism. Statistics demonstrate that between 3:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m., the immediate hour after most children are released from school, juvenile crime more than doubles from the preceding hour of 2:00 to 3:00.

It has become evident that safe and healthy alternatives need to be found for latchkey school children and that concentrated efforts, ones that focus on literacy, on tutoring, on homework assistance, are becoming necessary, especially for our at-risk youth.

YMCAs, like many after-school programs, have helped improve children's academic achievements, their school attendance, their behavior, their dropout rates and grade retention.

Denis Espinosa, a young man who recently testified at a Children's Caucus event here in Washington, is evidence that an after-school program can guide children to becoming responsible and productive adults. I congratulate Denis for his exemplary outlook, as well as

Anna Nechelles, executive director of the West Dade Branch of the YMCA, for her commitment to the future of south Florida's children.

GOP BUDGET IS A WOLF IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING

(Mr. CROWLEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, all year the GOP Congress has employed gimmicks and distractions against the American people in their attempt to pass a nearly trillion dollar tax break for the wealthy and special interests in our country, a tax break soundly rejected by hard-working Americans. In the past few months, the GOP has dressed its trickle-down, wolf-like budget in sheep's clothing. They now claim to be protecting Social Security, even calling for across-the-board cuts to save the surplus, when their own CBO numbers show them dipping into the Social Security surplus by nearly \$17 billion.

Back in 1935, they voted to table Social Security. How can we expect them today to try to protect it?

Now they are advocating a minimum wage bill, but upon further examination the minimum wage bill is loaded down with a tax relief for the wealthiest special interests in this country with only a 33-cent raise each year over the next 3 years for hard-working men and women in this country; a tax break for the wealthiest corporate CEOs in the history of the world and a measly 30 cents an hour raise for their workers.

Mr. Speaker, this is just a back-door attempt, an attempt made in sheep's clothing, for the GOP leadership to give their best friends a tax break.

NO MEANS NO

(Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, they just do not get it. President Clinton, Vice President Gore and the Democrat leaders in Congress are failing to grasp one simple concept: No means no.

When we passed every appropriations bill this year, we did it in a way that will protect every last dollar in the Social Security trust fund, but the Democrat leaders have opposed us almost every step of the way. They are pulling out all the stops to try to get their hands on that Social Security money for their big government Washington programs. That is the way they have been doing things for 30 years, but the Republicans have changed that. We stopped the raid on the Social Security trust fund and we are asking the Washington bureaucracy to reduce its spending by just 1 percent to make sure that Social Security remains strong.

We want to root out some of the waste, fraud and abuse that plagues the bureaucracy. So I hope President Clinton will sign our legislation that protects Social Security, because if he keeps telling us to dip into that Social Security money we will keep telling him no, and we will mean it.

THE REAL CONCERNS OF AMERICA, SOCIAL SECURITY, MEDICARE, HMO REFORM, TO NAME A FEW

(Mr. FROST asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, the American people want us to put aside the partisanship of the last Republican Congress and to get to work on American families' real concerns, the solvency of Social Security and Medicare, real HMO reform, more teachers and lower class sizes for our children.

Unfortunately, this Republican Congress has been little different from the last. They are holding hostage real HMO reform and they refuse to help local communities reduce class size by hiring 100,000 new teachers.

The chief actuary of the Social Security Administration has found that the Republican budget would do nothing to extend the life of Social Security, not by even a single day. They have done nothing to strengthen Medicare, and GOP leaders refuse to even admit the existence of American seniors' most pressing problem, the astronomical cost of prescription drugs.

On the other hand, Republicans tried to squander the surplus, risking Medicare and Social Security, to fund a \$1 trillion tax break for special interests. Those are the values of this Republican Congress, Mr. Speaker, \$1 trillion for tax breaks for special interests but not a dime for prescription drugs for seniors.

WE NEED A PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS

(Mrs. JONES of Ohio asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, this morning I rise to join my colleagues in lamenting legislation important to my constituents and the American people that the Republican leadership has ignored. I am speaking about gun safety, prescription drug benefits, the Patients' Bill of Rights and campaign finance reform.

The Republican leadership has disregarded the American people and killed these measures for this session of Congress. Democrats still believe we can get action on agendas that matter to reduce class size and raise student achievement by providing for local schools to hire 100,000 new teachers, make our neighborhoods safer and build on the progress we have made

over the last 7 years in reducing violent crime by funding 50,000 new police officers. We are committed to safeguarding the environment.

Another year, another Republican Congress that ignores the needs of middle class families; more interest in providing a trillion dollar tax cut for corporate and special interests, but they do not care about finding a dime for Medicare prescription drugs for seniors and now they are at the beck and call of the HMO lobbyists but they have failed to send a bipartisan Patients' Bill of Rights to Congress. It is time for all of these programs to get in place now more than ever.

THE MONEY BELONGS TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE, NOT THE GOVERNMENT

(Mr. KINGSTON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, in Washington there are a couple of things that are misunderstood, mostly by the liberals, that the government does not have money. Big shock, the government does not have money. It is the American people's money. It is hard-working America whose money is talked about as if it is theirs.

The money goes into two pots. One is for general spending and another pot, there are a lot of trust funds but the major two, the other pot is for Social Security. In the general fund pot, we are out. Yet we have heard today speaker after speaker say we need more spending for this, we need more spending for that.

Indeed, most of the liberals voted against the appropriations bills because they did not spend enough money. Well, my question is, if we are out of money in this pot and we have a lot of money in this pot, is that where we are going to get it? Because that is Social Security. If we are not going to take it from this trust fund, then we must want to increase taxes.

Wait a minute. Two weeks ago the other side joined Republicans and voted 419-to-0 against the Clinton tax proposals. The only way to do this, to make our budget, is to cut one cent out of the dollar. I hope the Democrats will join us on that.

THE FINAL YEAR OF THE 20TH CENTURY, A DISAPPOINTMENT FOR AMERICAN FAMILIES

(Ms. DELAURO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, to my prior colleague, I would just say there is no money to deal with his budget and it is because they had an \$892 billion tax cut for the wealthiest people in this country. Had they not tried this trick, we would be in a different position here today.

This year, the final year, of the 20th century, has been a disappointing one for the American families. Every time Congress has had the opportunity to help families in a meaningful way, the Republican leadership has sided with the special interests over the public interests.

□ 1030

The list of casualties is long: A patients' bill of rights, campaign finance reform, Medicare prescription drug benefits, smaller class sizes, and sensible gun safety reform is also being killed.

Since the Columbine tragedy occurred more than 6 months ago, the Republican leadership has consistently stifled every attempt to pass common sense gun safety measures, and yet 13 children every day are killed by guns, with 100,000 kids bringing guns to school every year. They should be ashamed of themselves, the Republican leadership, for letting the NRA write our gun laws and obstructing our attempts to close the loopholes that give criminals and children easy access to guns.

REPUBLICANS WANT TO GIVE BACK TO HARD-WORKING AMERICANS

(Mr. FOSSELLA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FOSSELLA. Mr. Speaker, at the outset let me commend my friend from New York (Mr. McNULTY) and his dad for 50 years of wonderful service to our country.

Mr. Speaker, I think this is healthy, and for those who feel clouded by the debate here, I would just like to put it in very simple terms: The core difference between the parties here, as I see it, is the notion of who wants to strengthen personal freedom; who wants to give back to the hard-working Americans who go work at sometimes two and three jobs to support their families, to put food on the table, to buy clothes for their kids for school, to buy that new microwave oven; who wants to be on their side and give them more of their hard-earned money back, and who feels it is appropriate for Washington to keep as much money as possible?

We had the debate about the appropriations bills. Well, the ordinary American is telling us to do our business and come back home. But what we have heard is that Congress passes the bills within certain caps, the White House vetoes it, yet never says where they want to get the additional money from to spend on their additional programs. I think it is legitimate for the American people to ask where is that money coming from.

AMERICANS WANT A CONGRESS THAT WORKS FOR THEM

(Mr. STUPAK asked and was given permission to address the House for 1

minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STUPAK. Mr. Speaker, here we are in November, and, quite frankly, this Republican Congress has done very little. The appropriations bills languish and the needs of the American people are not being met.

The GOP has spent the year trying to convince the American people that they need a \$792 billion tax cut for the wealthiest Americans, but America saw through this tax giveaway which raided the Social Security Trust Fund and rejected it.

Instead, the American people asked for things that cost very little and would improve their lives, like a patients' bill of rights so Americans and doctors can make their medical decisions and not the HMOs; like the increase in the minimum wage so all Americans can enjoy this strong economy; like 100,000 more teachers so we can reduce the class sizes; and why, Mr. Speaker, can we not enforce all the gun laws on the books and do background checks on every commercial sale of a gun, even those at gun shows?

No more excuses, no more exceptions. Mr. Speaker, let us work for the American people. Unfortunately, under the Republican-led Congress, it is always the same old song: More tax breaks for the rich and more tax on government. America wants a Congress that works for them, like Democrats are fighting for.

SOCIAL SECURITY WILL BE SAVED

(Mr. HAYES asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HAYES. Mr. Speaker, in 1997, I began traveling the 8th district of North Carolina, and I made two particular pledges; one was to save Social Security and the other was to do everything I could to balance the budget.

Well, here we are with the appropriations bills passed, we have stopped the raid on Social Security, and we have balanced the budget. It is that simple. Our spending appetite has been decreased, our priorities have been very clearly outlined.

Social Security will be saved because we have stopped the raid, and I applaud those for making the tough choices and making that possible.

JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATOURETTE). Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the pending business is the question of the Speaker's approval of the Journal of the last day's proceeding.

The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. McNULTY. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a